MFA Fine Arts School of Visual Arts

Course Listing 2025-26

MFA Fine Arts is a full-time, studio-based program in the practice of contemporary art. Students usually complete four consecutive semesters, taking Mentorship, Studio, Crit, Talks and a mix of elective Seminars and Workshops every semester, plus First-Year Seminar in the first semester and Thesis Seminar in the final semester. Students must pass an annual review in the second and fourth semesters and must complete a thesis project, thesis presentation and thesis portfolio. Courses in other graduate departments may be substituted for Seminars and Workshops with permission from the chair.

Core Courses

First-Year Seminar

FNG-5010

Instructor: Mark Tribe

This course provides first-year students with space and time to get to know one another by discussing contemporary art and related issues. Students give presentations on contemporary artists whose work is relevant to their own, discuss the work of these artists, and attend lectures on modern, postmodern and contemporary art. Students are required to take this course in the first semester.

Mentorship

FNG-5030 / FNG-6030, FNG-5035 / FNG-6035

Instructors: See MyServices for an up-to-date list of instructors.

In this course students have the opportunity to work individually with a faculty mentor on an ongoing basis, beginning in the first semester. Mentors provide individual feedback on student work, discuss related issues and offer guidance on matters of professional development during a series of one-on-one meetings. Meetings are scheduled by mentors in consultation with their mentees. Students are required to take one section of Mentorship each semester. Students should stay with the same mentor for at least a year and may continue with the same mentor for the duration of the program. If the student wants to change mentors, they should contact their academic advisor.

Studio

FNG-5050 / FNG-6050, FNG-5055 / FNG-6055

See MyServices for an up-to-date list of instructors.

This course enables students to work individually with a different faculty member each semester. Faculty provide feedback on student work and discuss related issues during a series of individually scheduled studio visits that should total three hours per semester. Students are required to take one section of Studio each semester.

Crit

FNG-5230 / FNG-5235, FNG-5240 / FNG-5245, FNG-6230 / FNG-6235, FNG-6240 / FNG-6245

See MyServices for an up-to-date list of instructors.

In this course students learn how others see and understand their work, develop their ability to receive and offer feedback, and develop a shared language for discussing art. Crits run for seven weeks, giving each student the opportunity to present their work twice. The format and duration of each crit is determined by the instructor. Students enroll in two consecutive Crit sections each semester.

Talks

FNG-5510 / FNG-5515 / FNG-6510 / FNG-6515

Instructor: Mark Tribe

This course exposes students to the ideas and practices of contemporary artists and those who study and write about their work. Equally important, it develops students' ability to present and discuss their own work. In the fall semester, students give short presentations on their own work. These are followed by lectures and panel discussions featuring artists, critics and scholars. The spring semester concludes with thesis presentations by second-year students. Students are required to take Talks every semester.

Thesis Seminar

FNG-6950-A

Instructors: Media Farzin, Miguel Luciano, Thyrza Goodeve, William Powhida

This course guides students through the MFA thesis process, focusing on the thesis presentation and thesis portfolio. It provides structure and feedback for students as they write about their work, document it, and combine words and images to communicate their ideas in person, in writing and online. Topics include best practices for writing about one's work, how to make presentations engaging, and what makes for an effective artist website and print catalog. By the end of the course students will be prepared for post-MFA professional life, with an artist

statement, a project description, an artist talk, and a website and/or catalog. Students take Thesis Seminar in the final semester.

Electives: Seminars and Workshops

Seminars run for 15 weeks and explore issues in art history, theory and practice. Assignments may involve reading, writing, presentations, field trips, and various forms of research, including creative projects. In Workshops, which run for seven weeks, students gain the skills and knowledge necessary to define and achieve their professional goals, create opportunities and navigate in the complex and rapidly changing ecosystems of contemporary art. Workshop assignments tend to be practical in nature: students may apply for a residency, shoot photographs of their work or rewrite their artist statement. In the first semester, students take one seminar or two workshops. In the second and third semesters, students may take two seminars, a seminar and two workshops, or four workshops. In the fourth semester, students take one seminar or two workshops.

Fall Seminars

Social Practice

FNG-5633-A

Instructor: Miguel Luciano

This seminar will explore socially engaged art practices that move beyond the conventions of traditional art spaces and into the public realm—where art as a social practice is grounded in its connection to alternative audiences and communities. Through readings, lectures, site visits and course assignments, students will learn about the processes and challenges of creating collaborative, interactive and community-based art projects in public spaces. We will also address the nuts and bolts of developing socially engaged public art projects, from site-specific research methodologies and community partnerships to writing proposals, budgeting and applying for grants. Throughout this seminar, students will develop and refine individual and/or collaborative projects that extend from their own studio practices.

Creative Adventure

FNG-5644-A

Instructor: James Clark

The artist's studio is a place for creative exploration, contemplation and production. It is also a place where artists show their work to peers, curators and gallerists, store their work, stare blankly into space, make messes, and take naps. In this course we will visit artists' studios each week, including the studios of SVA alumni and faculty. We may also visit some galleries, nonprofit venues and artist-run spaces, casting a large net outside the usual art awareness zones. We will talk with artists about their work, their use of material and space, and what inspires them. We will explore a wide range of artistic practices, and each student's own artistic processes through personal introspection and vigorous dialogue, creating self-awareness and enhancing vision. This course is designed to further each student's ability to formulate and articulate their own viewpoints on art-making as well as standards for individual practice. Each student will keep a notebook, either in writing or audio recordings, to document insights, interpretations and ideas for future investigations into the creative adventure.

Art Histories

FNG-5657-A

Instructor: William Powhida

This course introduces artists to the significant art practices, theories, and institutions of the past half century. We will focus on a selected text in each session, and consider its relation to relevant art works, key historic events and discourses. Students will contribute actively by suggesting (and researching) an artwork, reading primary and secondary texts, and writing short responses. We will also visit galleries and museums, watch films, and meet with art historians, critics and artists. Throughout the semester students will develop their own artistic "family tree": an art-centered historic timeline that contextualizes their practice in relation to cultural figures, works, or events (this can be an annotated chart or take another form). The goal is for students to synthesize their knowledge of contemporary art and its precedents, think analytically about their work and its contexts, and communicate their ideas effectively in conversation and presentations. The course requires a time commitment of several hours a week beyond the classroom.

Monsters

FNG-5628-A

Instructor: Thyrza Goodeve

Who are the monsters we have loved and feared in art, film, literature and popular culture? What does it mean to make or be a monster? From ancient chimeras to contemporary vampires, zombies and cyborgs, monsters display anxieties about

difference and create new spaces for imagining worlds and identities that challenge and exceed the normal. We will investigate the history of specific monsters from ancient Greece to medieval Christian monsters; Japanese ghosts and the history of manga; Frankenstein's monster; the art of Leonora Carrington, Hans Bellmer, Wangechi Mutu, Nick Cave, Kara Walker, Matthew Barney, and others.

Spring Seminars

On Painting

FNG-5638-A

Instructor: Suzanne Joelson

What are the guises of painting in the 21st century? From puddle to detail, from digital technologies and built constructions to traditional craft and representation, we consider the various methodologies, their precedents and what they mean to us now. Each week we will discuss another approach, using examples in galleries, on screens and in our studios. How are concepts manifest in their relation to material and process? By investigating the implications of artists' actions, we will be better able to take responsibility for our own decisions in the studio.

Art Markets

FNG-5653-A

Instructor: William Powhida

What are the different markets for art and artists? Why is the contemporary art market so confusing? How do galleries, museums, alternative spaces, residencies and art schools operate as markets that exchange social, cultural, institutional, embodied, or financial capital? This course will help you gain a better understanding of the range of markets that artists must navigate to support their practices. We will borrow Trevor Paglen's concept of experimental geography to explore how art's social and professional spaces are produced while considering the aesthetic dimensions of 'wealth' and the different forms it can take beyond money. Each student will develop and present a map or visualization of a particular market that is important to their goals as an artist. Independent research will be supplemented by shared readings, weekly assignments and group discussions. This course requires a significant time commitment outside of the classroom.

White Cubes

FNG-5752-A

Instructor: Mark Tribe

In the 20th century, the white cube emerged as the spatial archetype for exhibiting and experiencing modern and contemporary art. Art critic Brian O'Doherty compared the white cube to the caves where Paleolithic paintings are found: "Sheltered from the appearance of change and time, this specially segregated space is a kind of non-space, ultra-space, or ideal space where the surrounding matrix of space-time is symbolically annulled." In this course students visit exhibitions of contemporary art in museums and galleries, and discuss exhibition practices with gallerists and other arts professionals. Each student is required to curate a tour by selecting and contacting venues, planning an itinerary and guiding the group. In this way, students play an active role in ensuring that the venues we visit and the art we see are relevant to their own work and interests. Over the course of the semester, we will visit more than 100 exhibitions and participate in facilitated conversations about the work we see, the ways art markets influence and are influenced by galleries and museums, and how galleries and museums operate within larger socioeconomic systems.

Abstraction

FNG-5764-A

Instructor: Matthew Deleget

This seminar will explore our innate capacity to express ourselves through abstract images and objects, investigating the various forms and motivations for producing abstraction throughout human history and across the globe. We will look at artworks that were produced in a wide array of media, from cave painting to filmmaking, textiles to digital media, architectural monuments to land art. Class sessions will be thematic and conversational, considering abstraction through various lenses: social, formal, conceptual, political, material, etc. Discussion of artworks and readings will be supplemented by guest speakers, visits to exhibitions and collaborative research.

Early Fall Workshops

DIY Exhibitions

FNG-5842-A

Instructor: James Clark

In this workshop students work together to organize and install an exhibition of their own work in a gallery or other venue in New York City. Although the instructor finds the

exhibition venue, from that point on students are actively engaged in every aspect of making a DIY show. Key aspects of the process include determining the theme of the exhibition, deciding what to contribute (this may be existing work or new work made specifically for the exhibition), packing and delivering the work, working with venue staff, negotiating the placement of work within the space, sharing ideas about the work and how it is installed, considering non-standard approaches to presentation that engage audiences in active discovery ("nesting" vs. "plopping"), providing artist bios and descriptions, titling and promoting the exhibition, and organizing an opening reception. Students build solidarity with their peers, have fun and gain practical experience that will prepare them to organize their own group exhibitions in the future.

Proposal Writing

FNG-5863-A

Instructor: Thyrza Goodeve

In this practical, hands-on workshop in short-form writing, students develop thesis proposals and project proposals similar to those that are often required for grants, residencies and commissions. Students write, revise, read aloud and comment on one or two proposals, learning how to address practical and conceptual issues such as themes, intentions, materials, processes, techniques, timelines, references and relevant background information. This course is recommended for second-year students working on thesis proposals and first-year students interested in improving their proposal-writing skills.

DIY Art World

FNG-5934-A

Instructor: Matthew Deleget

This workshop is directed toward artists interested in extending their practice beyond the four walls of their studio and engaging in more expansive forms of support for their fellow artists and the greater arts community. This includes writing criticism, organizing exhibitions, running an exhibition space, participating in an artist collective and collaborating with an arts organization, as well as newer forms of proactive engagement with artists and the public. The primary motivation of an artist's catalyst is to build a strong, sustainable artist community and facilitate a constructive discourse around art-making and ideas.

The Law of Art

FNG-5987-A

Instructor: Franklin Boyd

You see a great image on Instagram ... can you use it in your work? You see another great image on Instagram—only this time it is your work incorporated into someone else's—should you sue? What kind of written agreement is standard with a gallery offering to show your work, consignment or representation? Can you disclaim authorship if your work is damaged during a show? Are you entitled to money if your work is resold by a collector? The law is present in each of your interactions in the art world; it is there when you have a problem (non-payment by a gallery) and when you have an opportunity (request for a big commission). This course introduces a range of issues that confront professional artists from the moment of creation of a work to consignment and sale of the work to the ongoing moral rights of artists in the work even after a sale. You will learn how to spot legal issues, overcome intimidation of contracts and legalese, and successfully negotiate for your desired outcome.

The Cold Call

FNG-5843-A

Instructor: Sharon Louden

Artists often think they have to wait for opportunity to knock on their door. Whether your goal is to exhibit your work, organize an event, publish an artist book or get funding for a project, this workshop will show you how to cultivate and pursue opportunities by doing research, preparing to make contact, reaching out, making the ask and following up. You will learn how to hone in on the opportunities that make sense for your work, organize your research, reach someone without a referral, make a cold call and manage expectations. Building community and audience are integral and intertwined in this process and are stressed throughout.

Late Fall Workshops

Connecting

FNG-5834-A

Instructor: Matthew Deleget

This workshop will teach artists how to introduce themselves and their work to new individuals in the art world and beyond, and to build long-term, collaborative relationships. Students will evaluate and update their professional goals, web presence, portfolio, and collateral print materials before examining and defining audience models,

effective communication strategies, and letters of introduction for their practice. This course will also discuss professional referrals, studio visits and effective follow-up with interested individuals, best practices for negotiation, and how to identify and conclude problematic relationships.

Artist as Curator

FNG-5837-A

Instructor: Nelson Santos

Curating exhibitions can be a great way for artists to extend their practice and create opportunities for their peers. In this course students will conceive an exhibition, identify potential venues, select artists and artwork, and draft a comprehensive exhibition proposal, including a curatorial statement, exhibition layout and checklist.

Multimedia Art

FNG-5849-A

Instructor: Kris Grey

This course immerses students in the dynamic world of multimedia installations, integrating both theoretical foundations and hands-on applications. Students will analyze contemporary and historical works while exploring various mediums, including sound, moving imagery, and installation elements. A key focus will be on developing a comprehensive proposal for an original multimedia installation project, allowing students to engage with the practical aspects of commissions and exhibitions in diverse venues such as public spaces, galleries, museums, and digital platforms. The course emphasizes community building through a presentation series, where students share their installation proposals and receive feedback in a supportive environment.

Time Machines

FNG-5856-A

Instructor: James Siena

A work of art that survives the passage of time can be seen as a time machine, as it travels down the timeline, engaging viewers across generations. It can also influence cultures beyond the lifespan of the artist who made the work. But if a work is not made to withstand the hazards of exposure to the environment and the passage of time, it might be lost. This course examines ways an artist can, if they wish, create durable works or come up with strategies for proper storage and preservation. Students will attend a custom frame-making demonstration and visit a conservation materials

supplier; a museum conservation lab; a preservation frame maker; and an artist's home, studio and archive.

Grants and Residencies

FNG-5944-A

Instructor: Aya Rodriguez-Izumi

Grants, fellowships and residencies are an important part of developing an artist's career. How do you learn about them, decide which are the best fit for you and your goals, and make a successful application? How can you make the most of residencies and develop long-term relationships with funders? In this workshop you will learn how to research funding and residency opportunities, select images of your work, and write statements and budgets tailored to specific institutions. You will put these skills into practice by completing a mock application for a grant, fellowship or residency and will work as a group to define the criteria for an actual departmental alumni grant, review applications and select a winner.

Early Spring Workshops

Galleries

FNG-5832-A

Instructor: Matthew Deleget

This workshop examines the inner workings of the artist/gallery partnership. Students will identify and research galleries that would be appropriate for them and their work and learn how to forge and sustain meaningful, long-term relationships with galleries and gallerists. We will discuss how to introduce your work, gain referrals, conduct studio visits and price your work. We will also consider exhibition logistics, sales and discounts, and online sales platforms.

DIY Exhibitions

FNG-5842-B

Instructor: James Clark

In this workshop students work together to organize and install an exhibition of their own work in a gallery or other venue in New York City. Although the instructor finds the exhibition venue, from that point on students are actively engaged in every aspect of making a DIY show. Key aspects of the process include determining the theme of the exhibition, deciding what to contribute (this may be existing work or new work made

specifically for the exhibition), packing and delivering the work, working with venue staff, negotiating the placement of work within the space, sharing ideas about the work and how it is installed, considering non-standard approaches to presentation that engage audiences in active discovery (“nesting” vs. “plopping”), providing artist bios and descriptions, titling and promoting the exhibition, and organizing an opening reception. Students build solidarity with their peers, have fun and gain practical experience that will prepare them to organize their own group exhibitions in the future.

Performative Art

FNG-5842-B

Instructor: E. Jane

In this workshop students make performances or incorporate performance art techniques into their artistic practice—-a performance element in an installation, a sculpture that performs, a social media campaign as a performance work—-there are endless possibilities. Art historian RoseLee Goldberg said, "the history of performance art in the twentieth century is the history of a permissive, open-ended medium with endless variables, executed by artists impatient with the limitations of more established art forms, and determined to take their art directly to the public." Through art-making we will explore how permissive and open-ended the medium can be, and how to navigate sharing such work with an art institution through score-making and proposals. Each student will complete one artwork that considers performance and a proposal for how they would ideally exhibit their work taking into account setting/space, plan, audience size, costume, lighting and description. Students should prepare to think critically about the work they produce and be able to articulate their processes and goals for their work using varying methods (drawing, writing, image collection, and so on). Over the semester, one-minute warm-up performances will help students explore what excites them about performance. We will have two critiques where students can show their work in various stages of development. The final critique will also feature a guest critic. Through field trips we will examine other works of art that engage in performance and discuss the techniques they use to make their art successful.

Document and Archive

FNG-5871-A

Instructor: Aya Rodriguez-Izumi

Documentation is so much more than taking a picture of a finished work. In this course we will explore a wide range of systems and techniques for documenting and how to incorporate them into a variety of practices. Together we will look at documentation and

archiving methods for various stages of the creative process. We will address technical skills to document work, from digital methods to what to do with your documentation afterwards, as well as a variety of applications for which it can be used. Industry professionals will offer insider perspectives and explore what it means to document, build an archive and, ultimately, your legacy.

On Completion

FNG-5874-A

Instructor: James Siena

Some artists have trouble letting go; that is, declaring a work finished or complete. Titling, documentation, cataloging, these are all aspects of completing work. Institutions also play a role in the completion of works and their presentation. This course examines ways artists and institutions organize and index artworks, helping artists move forward and create new works, unencumbered by the burden of incompleteness. Students will meet with a museum curator, view artwork in museum study rooms and visit a company that makes online catalogues raisonnés and a gallery archive.

Late Spring Workshops

Make a Statement

FNG-5829-A

Instructor: Accra Shepp

How do you explain your work in 200 words or less? This workshop will help you write a great artist statement that sheds light on who you are as an artist without lapsing into jargony art speak. We will discuss the various roles artists' statements play for emerging artists entering the art world, which naturally leads to a set of strategies and techniques for writing a coherent and engaging text to accompany your work. We will also address the artist résumé, which is at least as important as the statement: how it is different from a standard, professional résumé and an academic CV, which formats are preferred, and how your résumé can help you communicate your professional narrative at a quick glance. You will be provided with a simple résumé template to which you can add your own information. By the end of the workshop, you will have a statement and résumé you can use on your website and in applicants for residencies, exhibitions, grants, and other opportunities.

Making a Living

FNG-5851-A

Instructor: Aya Rodriguez-Izumi

Artists find many ways to make a living. This course looks beyond gallery sales and teaching to explore other ways artists get paid, including public and private commissions, exhibiting in museums and other nonprofit venues, curating, writing, editing, public speaking and serving on selection panels. We will discuss ways of cultivating these opportunities, look at common proposal formats and contracts, and meet artists who have developed diverse sources of income that are directly related to their practice.

Web Presence

FNG-5852-A

Instructor: Matthew Deleget

This course will help artists develop a clear and effective web presence. Artists will begin by articulating their professional goals, and then conceive and implement impactful website, social media and email communications strategies in support of those goals. Participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of using the web to effectively communicate about their work in order to build sustainable, professional careers.

Artist as Educator

FNG-5873-A

Instructor: Sohee Koo

Many artists choose to teach as a complement to their studio practice, something that keeps them closely connected to the artistic community while forcing them to stay sharp and current. This course will introduce students to the possibilities of teaching—from museum education to K-12 to university studies, and will provide the skills necessary to identify and secure those positions. Time will be spent on the unique and extensive process of applying to college teaching jobs, including the materials required, the process of review and the importance of each required document. Through in-class assignments and peer workshopping, students will leave the course with a final teaching philosophy, cover letter, curriculum vitae and artist's statement for their teaching packet, as well as an outreach plan.

Art Business

FNG-5873-A

Instructor: Franklin Boyd

To be successful in today's art market, making great work often isn't enough. Professional artists need to know how to organize their studios as businesses, negotiate representation with galleries, review licensing opportunities and complete sales with collectors. This course will cover the commercial aspects of being a working artist as well as explore the roles of auction houses, art investment funds, art loans and art exchanges.